

**Friendship Heights
Transportation Management District
Advisory Committee
December 14, 2010**

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Voting Members Present

Joe Dixon	GEICO
William P. Farley (Chair)	Town of Somerset
David Glass	Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Cobey R. Kuff	Wisconsin Place
Allison Lazare	United Educators
Ann F. Lewis	Friendship Heights Village
Bill McCloskey	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
William Nathan	M&T Bank
Robert Schwarzbart	Friendship Heights Village Council

Non-Voting Members Present

TMD Staff Present

Nakengi Byrd	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Jim Carlson	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Sheila Wilson	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services

Absent

Ed Axler	M-NCPPC (reassigned)
Sandra L. Brecher	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Julie Davis	Somerset House Management Assn.
Kerri Gates	The JBG Companies
Tiffany Gee (Vice Chair)	Chevy Chase Land Company
Chief Roy Gordon	Chevy Chase Village Police
Capt. Russell Hamill	Montgomery County Police
Kenneth Hartman	B-CC Services Center

Guests

Richard Bingham	B-CC Regional Services Center
Bob Joiner	The Agenda News

Abbreviations used herein include:

BRT = Bus Rapid Transit
CE = County Executive
CCLC = Chevy Chase Land Company
MTA = Maryland Transit Administration
NIH = National Institutes of Health
SHA = State Highway Administration
WMATA = Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Item 1 & 2 – Introductions/Minutes Approval: Chair **William Farley** called the meeting to order. Members and guests introduced themselves. **Mr. Farley** announced that he would need to depart the meeting at 9:30 to attend to an unexpected matter; **Bill McCloskey** agreed to Chair the remainder of the meeting in Vice Chair **Tiffany Gee's** absence.

Item 3 – Chair Comments: **Mr. Farley** welcomed two new members to the Committee:

Allison Lazare – United Educators / Large Business Representative

William Nathan – M&T Bank / Small Business Representative

Mr. McCloskey noted that there was a third member approved by Council – **Thomas Austing**, EagleBank. **Mr. Carlson** said **Mr. Austing** left his position at the bank about a month ago, so the second Small Business Representative position remains open.

Item 4 – Mr. Carlson directed the Committee to view the previous year's budget priorities document, included in the meeting packet. He said **Mr. Schwarzbart** had suggested that the cover letter also be included, as it outlines the rationale and explains why the priorities were selected. **Mr. Carlson** said there would still be time to revise the cover letter prior to the meeting with the County Executive.

Mr. Carlson said the County's current fiscal crisis may make the TMD budget requests an academic exercise, but it is important to keep these matters in front of the County Executive and make sure the Committee is heard since funding will again be available at some point.

Mr. Carlson said last year's budget priorities continue to be germane to the TMD's purpose:

- Improve All Bus Service
- Enhance Pedestrian Safety
- Promote Car Sharing
- Provide Adequate Funding to Staff and Operate the TRiPS Commuter Store
- Promote Employee Transit Use Through Continued Funding [Restore Funding] of Super Fare Share

Mr. Carlson said the condition of some crosswalks in Friendship Heights, particularly at the Wisconsin / Willard Avenue intersection, were poor – so worn away in some instances it difficult to make them out. There are a number of such areas in the TMD. Crosswalk repainting would be relatively inexpensive for the County, as it does not include extensive infrastructure work.

Mr. Schwarzbart agreed and added that pedestrian lighting near the crosswalks is not always adequate. At night, pedestrians may not realize just how difficult it is to see them. Anything that can be done to enhance pedestrian rights of way would be beneficial.

Mr. Carlson said the issue of the crosswalk improvement and lighting will be added the budget priorities under Enhance Pedestrian Safety.

Mr. McCloskey asked if it is within the scope of the budget priorities document to ask the County Executive to do non-budget related things, such as pursuing action with the State Highway Administration (SHA) to change the signal timing on Wisconsin Avenue. **Mr. Carlson** said the County is still planning to adjust the average walking time from the current four feet per second to the slower walk time of 3.5 feet per second. **Mr. McCloskey** said the change will not be completed until 2012. **Mr. Carlson** said he would check with the County's traffic signal engineers on the issue; **Mr. McCloskey** said he would rather include it in the meeting with **County Executive Leggett** so the CE could direct the engineers. **Mr. McCloskey** noted that putting the signal timing on an accelerated implementation schedule had been included in last year's budget document at Number 2, Enhance Pedestrian Safety.

Mr. Schwarzbart said the emphasis has always on promoting the traffic flow on Wisconsin Avenue, yet there are places on Wisconsin where preference is made for cross traffic flow, such as NIH. If an accommodation can be made at those locations, then an accommodation could also be made for the crossing areas in front of the two medical buildings [5530 and 5454 Wisconsin Ave].

Mr. Glass said lengthening the crossing times in front of the medical buildings could adversely affect traffic and cause back ups along Wisconsin. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said he did not believe it would impact the traffic to a great degree, and, in any event, it is advantageous to slow traffic at this location. The area in front of the medical buildings is an area of heavy pedestrian use, so slowing traffic is going to be beneficial.

Mr. Glass suggested that a study be done of the potential traffic impacts. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said the Committee had been working on the issue and had gained a little more time as a result. **Mr. Glass** said he did not think a recommendation for longer crossing times was appropriate for the budget priorities document without some supporting data. **Mr. McCloskey** said the Committee could recommend further study. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said a study had been done earlier by SHA, based on a recommendation from the Committee and **Barbara Tauben** from the Friendship Heights Village Civic Association. **Mr. Glass** said the study was not focused specifically on the medical buildings, but was farther south toward Western Avenue.

Mr. Carlson said the County's traffic engineers have indicated on separate occasions that signals cannot be changed in isolation – there are 'downstream' effects. Signal timing, especially along Wisconsin Avenue, must be carefully coordinated with DC signal timing. **Mr. Carlson** said it would be appropriate to recommend further study of the area. The earlier traffic visit by SHA involved more of a 'walk-through' of the area; the engineers took notes and made some observations, but it is unclear whether or not this qualified as a 'study'.

Mr. McCloskey asked if the issue was ever resolved. Did SHA issue a report? **Mr. Carlson** said it was his understanding that there was no further action taken, although **Ms. Tauben** continued to seek communication from SHA. Shortly after this study the County was advised that engineering standards guiding pedestrian crossing times had been revised, lengthening the amount of time pedestrians have to cross – from the current assumed average walking speed of four feet per second, to the slower average of 3.5 feet per second. Beyond this engineering change, it seems unlikely that any more time would be added in front of the medical buildings.

Ann Lewis asked if the change is going to be reflected in the current 2012 deadline. **Mr. Carlson** said the 2012 deadline is the date for the signal change county-wide. **Mr. McCloskey** said he believed this is also a state-wide deadline. **Ms. Lewis** and **Mr. McCloskey** agreed that the current 2012 deadline for the signal change should be accelerated because of Friendship Heights' medical buildings, and to include this in the budget priorities request. Both also agreed that medical facilities should receive priority for this type of change.

Mr. Carlson reiterated that the Committee will be asking for two things in the budget priorities document:

- To move Friendship Heights higher in the priority list for the signal change to 3.5 feet per second due to the presence of the medical buildings (at 5530 and 5454 Wisconsin); and
- A separate traffic/pedestrian study for the area of Wisconsin Avenue in front of the medical buildings to investigate the feasibility of lengthening crossing times beyond the planned engineering change of 3.5 ft. per sec.

Mr. Farley noted the arrival of **David Glass** to the meeting, completing quorum, and asked for a review and vote on the November minutes. The minutes were approved and seconded without changes.

Mr. Carlson said he discussed what constitutes a quorum with the County Executive's office. In some earlier instances the Committee had been using a majority of the filled positions to achieve quorum vs. a majority of all positions, filled or not; i.e., if there are 12 voting members, with two positions unfilled, then seven votes is

considered a quorum. However, a true quorum is a plus-one majority of all positions on the Committee, including all vacant positions, which means there must be eight votes on all Committee business. The CE's office will consider all past majority votes prior to notification of this rule to be valid; however, all future votes must consist of a true quorum of eight votes.

Mr. McCloskey said the crosswalk restriping should also be added to the pedestrian safety section of the budget priorities document.

Cobey Kuff said the condition of the roadway itself at the corner of Wisconsin and Willard was in bad condition and in need of repair or resurfacing. Walking across Wisconsin at that intersection requires care due to the uneven surface. **Mr. Carlson** said SHA is responsible for the road surface, so any request would have to be directed to the state. **Mr. Carlson** said he would contact SHA to get further information; and possibly a letter from the Committee would be appropriate. The letter would be in the form of a recommendation to **County Executive Leggett**, urging the County to work with SHA to repair the road. **Mr. Carlson** noted that the brick pavers at the crosswalk into the bus station are also in poor shape due to the constant bus traffic.

Mr. Farley suggested that presenting each roadway as a separate section with its own issues may be a better way to present the problem. The Town of Somerset asked **Mr. Farley** to bring an additional matter before the Committee. There have been a number of complaints from residents about the difficulty of turning right onto Wisconsin Avenue from Dorset Avenue to travel south on Wisconsin. Currently, there is a No Right On Red sign at the intersection, causing traffic to sit for many minutes waiting for the signal to change. There would be less idling traffic, adding to pollution, and residents could more quickly exit without the restriction.

Mr. Carlson said the turn restriction sounded like an engineering matter, based on driver sight lines or traffic speed. **Mr. Farley** said there had been a wall at the intersection that interfered with sight lines, but it has been removed for other construction. Once the wall was removed, drivers had good visibility at the intersection. **Mr. Farley** said this issue could be included in the Wisconsin Avenue study.

Ms. Lewis said the road surface on Wisconsin at the entrance to the bus terminal is usually difficult, and was especially hard during last year's snow storms. With the probability of additional snow this year, the road will be in real need of repair. Due to the unevenness of the road, any accumulation of snow makes walking very difficult.

Mr. Schwarzbart the condition of the bus terminal itself is poor, with areas of uneven brick work causing a tripping hazard. There is also the continuing issue of the missing bench seat on Western Avenue. **Mr. Carlson** said the Chevy Chase Land Company (CCLC) had committed to repair of the bench. **Mr. Schwarzbart** added that it had been quite some time, about 18 months, and there had been no action.

Mr. McCloskey asked if the missing bench was an enforcement issue, if CCLC could be cited. **Mr. Carlson** said he did not know if that was a possibility; he said it had been a while since he had spoken with the Land Company about the bench – he would prefer to handle it informally and would follow up again.

Mr. Farley asked if the No Turn On Red sign on Wisconsin at Dorset was a County sign. **Mr. Carlson** said he would check, but in general, on state roads, the signs, signal equipment, gutters, surface and other infrastructure are the responsibility of SHA. The operation of the signals falls to the County.

Mr. McCloskey asked who deals with the brick pavers at the bus station. **Mr. Carlson** said he believed the bricks were the responsibility of the Land Company, at least those closest to the station, such as around the bike racks. Since multiple entities with differing responsibilities converge at Western and Wisconsin – CCLC, DDOT, Montgomery County, SHA – it has been difficult at times to identify who has responsibility for which area. For example, all of Western Avenue, including the sidewalks on the Maryland side of the street. are the

responsibility of DDOT; however, CCLC also maintains some of the common areas, as does the County. **Mr. McCloskey** asked if the responsibilities would have been laid out in the original planning documents. **Mr. Carlson** will investigate and get a final answer for the Committee.

Mr. Carlson said DDOT repaired the curb stone at the corner of Western and also replaced the bricks next to it. He agreed with **Mr. Schwarzbart** that the bricks were not completely even, but at least there were no missing bricks as before.

Mr. McCloskey said a Friendship Heights resident had received an email from **Kyle Liang**, senior planning specialist for the County, indicating that a mid-block crosswalk, ADA curb cuts and pedestrian safety devices are now planned for Friendship Boulevard, facilitating safer pedestrian access to Wisconsin Place. **Mr. Carlson** noted that this represents a change in position for the County, which previously was against installing a mid-block crossing on Friendship. **Mr. McCloskey** said the Committee was on record as being in favor of a mid-block crossing.

Mr. Farley noted that the first item on the budget priorities document is the improvement of bus service. However, how can the Committee explain to residents that it is in favor of improving bus service while at the same time service is being cut? **Mr. Carlson** said the County is in a difficult position fiscally and, while bus service has definitely been affected, the County has made only 'surgical' cuts to certain low performing routes, reducing stop frequency; or, in a few cases, eliminating portions of some routes. Keeping Ride On service is a high priority for the County.

Mr. Farley said the route that serves MacArthur Boulevard [Route 32] past the Old Angler's Inn, now stops before it gets to Carderock, eliminating about a mile of the route. Cutting a mile from a route, even if it serves only 10 people, can cause a large impact to an area. That becomes 10 more cars on the road; on the bus it is only one mile each way and maybe a gallon of gas to get out there and back.

Mr. McCloskey said this could be included in the budget priorities document by asking that all previously reduced bus service is "restored as soon as possible."

Mr. Farley added that when service is restored, possibly in a few years, people who had been riding the bus but switched to private vehicles after the service cuts may be less likely to return to mass transit.

Mr. Schwarzbart said the wording of the document could in the context of restoring bus service generally and specifically the route mentioned by **Mr. Farley** [Route 32].

Mr. McCloskey added that one of the four broad goals of the County's TMDs is to increase transportation capacity. He added that it is also important that the County's real time bus notification system, indicating when the next bus will arrive at a particular stop, be preserved in the next budget. This was not mentioned in last year's budget priorities; however, now that it is something the County is working on it will be important to continue with it.

Mr. Schwarzbart said one area in which Ride On could save money is through stronger enforcement of the no-idling rule in the bus terminals. The buses seem to be idling all of the time, driving up fuel consumption. **Mr. Carlson** said all Ride On and Metrobus drivers have been directed to idle no more than three minutes at stops [Drivers stopping at the Friendship Heights terminal must cut their engines immediately]. **Mr. Schwarzbart** added that having to report idling buses puts the burden on the public, when it should be terminal supervisors who should be enforcing it. The supervisors are not doing their jobs and the people sitting in the terminal are getting gassed by the fumes. **Mr. McCloskey** said the Committee should ask for better enforcement of existing rules in the budget priorities document, which is not a cost.

Mr. McCloskey said the County should put some money toward the printing of bus schedules. **Mr. Carlson** said this is something that has presented a challenge for the County, as it is a significant expense. Although the trend is to make this information available by electronic media – phones, iPods, computers, etc. – many of Ride On’s customers do not have access to this type of media; also, many people still prefer the printed schedule. Therefore, the budget priorities document will include a request to continue printing paper schedules.

Mr. Farley asked if there was anything that could be done to influence Metro; it is driving customers away with high fares and many people may start driving as a result. **Mr. Carlson** said very little could be done to change WMATA’s (Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority) pricing structure. He added that Ride On always raises its fares in response in order to maintain a uniform pricing structure for customers. The Committee may want to consider a letter to the WMATA general manager or the board [in the form of a recommendation to MCDOT Director **Art Holmes**] urging lower fares. **Mr. Farley** said it would be within the Committee’s responsibility as a body that advocates for increased transit use. **Mr. McCloskey** said Montgomery County has a position on WMATA board and the County Executive can certainly make the case through the representative. **Mr. Farley** said the letter could be a separate issue to be decided after discussion of the budget priorities.

Ms. Lewis asked about the feasibility of partnering with local retailers to print the bus schedules, making advertising space available. It would be relatively inexpensive for a large retailer like Giant to print schedules. The County has the software and other information that it could make available. **Mr. Carlson** said he would discuss the idea with **Beverly Lemasters**, who handles the Ride On schedules.

Mr. Schwarzbart said, in reference to fare increases, while people don’t like to pay more it may be the only means of maintaining service. **Mr. Farley** said one option would be the New York City model, which requires the same fare no matter where you are going.

Mr. Schwarzbart said he had reservations about writing a letter opposing future fare increases because the County may need the flexibility with its budget. He added that he certainly is not in favor of fare increases, but that they are necessary to operate the system and maintain some flexibility.

Mr. Glass said no one is in favor of fare increases, but both Metro and Ride On are “broke”. He asked what other solutions were possible, given the budget. It would be nice to have bus service everywhere, but given a \$300 million deficit, what is the solution if fares are not raised? **Mr. Farley** said there is a user tax; and if people are using Metro, that keeps car used down that keeps carbon out of the air - an overall benefit for everyone that we all want to pay for; it would come from other tax dollars, so it would be subsidized. **Mr. Glass** asked what would be a realistic source of additional revenue, if not through fares. **Mr. McCloskey** said there is also a state contribution to WMATA. **Mr. Glass** said there would have to be new thinking about how to live within the current fiscal restrictions. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said he did not know how any governmental agency at any level could continue to afford a transit subsidy.

Mr. Farley said the job of the Committee isn’t to direct how to allocate tax dollars, but to point out that cutting service and raising rates tends to drive away customers, putting more cars on the road and stressing that part of the transportation system.

Mr. Schwarzbart said he recalled a study done of Metro customers and their tolerance for paying higher fares. The conclusion was that they would willingly absorb a fare increase provided there was no cut in service. He added that driving is not just the trip to a destination but the added expense of parking, which is a significant cost in most cases. The study results indicate there is a measure of flexibility among riders regarding the cost of transit. **Mr. McCloskey** said that, although the responses to the survey indicated that people would absorb a fare increase, ridership has gone down. Whether or not that is a response to lost jobs has not been determined, but ridership has gone down since the fare increase.

Mr. Carlson said the Committee should limit the discussion to those items that can realistically be presented to the County Executive, although the other issues under discussion can also be pursued separately.

Mr. Farley said the discussion of the broader issues presents some opportunities to invite transit officials from WMATA and Ride On to brief the Committee next year. **Mr. Carlson** said **Phil McLaughlin**, Ride On's transit planner, had come to the Committee and could make a follow up appearance to explain how the system is working since the service cuts were made. **Mr. Carlson** added that under the FY12 budget, the Division of Transit Services may have to produce a five percent savings plan, which is less than the previous savings plan. The bus routes are seen as a sensitive issue, and will likely be preserved in the FY12 budget.

Mr. McCloskey asked if the Committee should include a statement of support for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

Mr. Carlson said there was no mention of BRT in the previous document, but it could be included. **Mr.**

McCloskey said the study results were due December; he added that he would like to see the County's continued support for the project. **Mr. Carlson** said the BRT study received full funding in the last budget.

Mr. Farley said the issue has been somewhat contentious, with recent gubernatorial candidates staking out slightly different positions on BRT vs. light rail for the Purple Line. Committee members agreed to add support for continued funding for BRT to the budget priorities document.

Mr. Glass said he would rather that the money used for BRT goes toward maintaining the current bus service. He added that once BRT is established not only does the County have to keep it running but also has to maintain its current fleet of buses. It does not seem realistic. **Mr. McCloskey** said in some cases BRT would just be speeding up existing bus routes, for instance the Georgia Avenue routes. **Mr. Glass** said it does not make sense to fund BRT if the current system cannot be maintained.

Mr. Farley requested a vote on whether or not to include a statement of support for BRT in the budget priorities document, or to focus the request on continued funding for the existing service only. The Committee voted two to six to omit support for the BRT in document.

Mr. Farley requested a second vote to write a letter requesting no further increases in bus fares during FY12.

Ms. Lewis said the Committee was not dictating a specific level for Metro fares, but urging the Metro board to keep in mind the impact of higher fares.

The Committee voted in favor of writing a letter in support of maintaining fare levels through FY12. **Mr. Carlson** said he would work with **Mr. Farley** on the letter. **Mr. Carlson** said the letter would be in the form of a recommendation to the County Executive.

Mr. Farley exited the meeting due to a commitment. **Mr. McCloskey** chaired the rest of the meeting in his absence.

Mr. McCloskey asked the Committee to view the car sharing section of the FY11 budget priorities document and make recommendations. **Mr. Glass** asked for clarification about the provision of commercial parking space for car sharing. **Mr. Carlson** said the section was a general statement of support for car sharing and there were already several commercial spaces in Friendship Heights that were leased to a car share company. At the time of the previous budget discussion, the focus was on promoting more such spaces. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said Friendship Heights did not have the same parking facilities available in the other areas, so it may be necessary to negotiate some parking spaces in the commercial lots. **Mr. Carlson** added that the negotiation would be between the car sharing company and the commercial entity – the County would not necessarily be involved in the negotiation. **Mr. Carlson** said the only County involvement with car sharing involves the current Request For Proposal (RFP) to bring car sharing to public parking facilities. The RFP is still being evaluated.

Mr. McCloskey asked if a request could be made to set aside some County spaces along Friendship Boulevard for car sharing. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said there is a problem with poor parking enforcement along Friendship, so

trying to set aside spaces for car sharing may be an issue. **Mr. McCloskey** said he was sure Zipcar or another car share company would see urge strict enforcement of their space. **Mr. Glass** said he understood that the RFP would be for the car share company to pay the County for its spaces; **Mr. Carlson** said that was correct. **Mr. Carlson** added that it may be a disadvantage, however, to be parked on Friendship Boulevard as it is behind Wisconsin Place and does not offer the kind of visibility that car share companies desire. Spaces would probably have to be close to the intersections of Western or Willard. **Mr. McCloskey** added that spaces could also be made available along Willard, next to the GEICO property. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said the Willard location may be better since the street narrows along Friendship Boulevard as it approaches Western. **Mr. McCloskey** said the document could be changed from saying ‘provision of commercial parking’ to ‘public parking on Willard or Friendship’. **Mr. McCloskey** suggested striking the section recommending car sharing for all new developments, since newer projects are now some time away.

Mr. McCloskey directed the Committee to review the section that asks for TRiPS commuter store funding. He asked **Mr. Carlson** about business at the store. **Mr. Carlson** said it has been getting an increasing amount of business, although it is not as busy as the Silver Spring TRiPS store. The store provides an outlet for SmarTrip cards and other items. Although regular SmarTrip is available at retailers like Giant and CVS, the Senior/Disabled SmarTrip is only available at the TRiPS store; this is because the application for the Senior/Disabled SmarTrip requires ID verification and other paperwork. **Mr. Schwarzbart** asked if printed schedules are available; **Mr. Carlson** said both Metro and Ride On schedules are available at TRiPS. Staffing for the store is adequate, using a combination of light duty personnel and contracted staff. **Mr. Schwarzbart** noted that the phrasing of the TMD staff section, which says ‘consists of’ would be better phrased as ‘TMD staffing should consist of’ to bring the document more in line with its ‘wish list’ function.

Mr. Glass reiterated his position that the TRiPS store is a waste of funding; also, the current lease of \$1 per year is something that could be sold back to the Land Company.

Mr. McCloskey called for a vote to continue to fund the TRiPS commuter store, or to close it. **Ms. Lewis** said she wished to speak in favor the store, citing Friendship Heights’ large senior population and the fact that the Senior SmarTrip is not readily available at other retail locations. **Mr. Glass** asked if other locations could be encouraged to sell the Senior card. **Mr. Carlson** said the ID verification process and the paperwork involved in the purchase a Senior card would make selling the card less desirable for retailers. A regular SmarTrip card sale is a quick money or charge transaction with no other paperwork needed. **Mr. Schwarzbart** added that the TRiPS store also serves as a central location and an entryway into the County and State. This is a developing area that requires that kind of service; and the store is at a transportation hub, located at the convergence of a Metro station, bus terminal and taxi stand. **Mr. Glass** suggested the staff at the Community Center could provide the same service. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said that even if the Center could be set up to sell the Senior cards, the staff is not as well versed in transportation issues, as they are involved in other matters.

Mr. McCloskey again asked for a vote, either urging the County Executive to continue support for TRiPS, or to close it. The Committee voted to continue support for the TRiPS store.

Mr. McCloskey directed the Committee to the section recommending continued funding for the Super FareShare program. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said, in light of the program’s suspension, it should be removed from the document. **Mr. Carlson** cautioned against removing it, since the program is only suspended; the funds may be available at some point to restore it. **Mr. Schwarzbart** suggested the wording should be such that funding is restored to Super FareShare ‘when feasible’. The Committee voted in favor of retaining and updating the Super FareShare section.

Item 5 – Updates: **Mr. Carlson** Commuter Services hosted its second SmartBenefits seminar for employers at the Wisconsin Place Community Center. The session, with WMATA and Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) staff in attendance, provided an update regarding tax changes to SmartBenefits and changes to the

SmarTrip card. Changes to SmarTrip include the separation of the parking benefit on the card from the transit benefit and issues related to how the benefits are administered. The seminar was very well attended, with about nearly 50 attendees. **Sheila Wilson** added that there will be three separate pockets or purses on SmarTrip, which include transit, parking and a personal purse. WMATA will be rolling out the changes gradually, notifying companies of the change at different times. **Ms. Wilson** said the WMATA representative will call each company as the program is introduced to help transition it to the new features. **Mr. Glass** asked if the same SmarTrip card will be used; **Ms. Wilson** said the same card will be used, but that there will be a software change that will be downloaded, and all cards must be registered with WMATA.

Mr. McCloskey said one of SmarTrip provisions will allow employers to recapture money from their employee at the end of the month if it is not all spent. Have employers in Friendship Heights said what they plan to do in this regard? **Mr. Carlson** said no decision has been reached at this point. **Mr. McCloskey** said commuters will be upset if this is done.

Ms. Wilson said she will be hosting a Commuter Information Day (CID) at the Barlow Building (5454 Wisconsin Avenue). **Mr. Carlson** said a CID is a commuter outreach event for employees that promote transit and other commute alternatives. Lobby CIDs in office buildings are an efficient way to get in front of a large numbers of commuters.

Mr. Carlson said the current \$230 transit benefit, which was to have reverted back to its pre-stimulus level of \$120 on December 31, has been extended in the House as part of Congress's re-approval of transportation funding for 2011.

Item 6 – Other Business: **Mr. McCloskey** asked if any progress had been made in getting law enforcement to participate in the TMD meetings. **Mr. Carlson** said he had not been in contact for some time with Community Liaison Officer **Denise Gill**, but that he would follow up.

Mr. McCloskey asked about Committee vacancies. **Mr. Carlson** said one small and one large employer were still needed. **Jeff Schumacher** from Microsoft had expressed interest in joining the Committee but had to withdraw due to his workload. Large employers consist of 50 or more employees; small employers are 49 and below. **Mr. Carlson** said candidates must be nominated and vetted by the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber.

Mr. Carlson said members can miss up to three non-consecutive meetings or two consecutive meetings before their position is considered vacated. Due to the need for a quorum, **Mr. Carlson** said he has not strictly enforced meeting attendance, but will have to start doing so in 2011.

Mr. McCloskey said a resident of his community had written to GEICO requesting the driveway strip at Western Avenue that controls the signal be reactivated (to flash during off hours). **Mr. Carlson** explained that the issue with the light is that it remains on full cycle even when there is no one exiting the GEICO property. **Mr. McCloskey** added that the signal is not synchronized with the Jenifer Street light, so traffic usually must stop at both intersections. [A subsequent communication from DDOT indicated that the light issue is being protested by some residents on the DC side of Western; the residents do not want the GEICO signal to be on a flash cycle. DDOT is examining the issue]

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 AM
Next meeting date: January 11, 2011